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HV 12 US

147525

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SUBJECT: TWA HIJACKING

REF: TEL AVIV 3336

FOR CHARGE ZURHELLEN

1. Positions you took during exchange with Bitan fully endorsed. You should stress in strongest terms to Mrs. Meir and others that neither USG's efforts nor those of TWA terminated and if Israelis persist in what seems here to be stimulation of emotions, they may well further exacerbate situation and seriously undermine current endeavors. Company's efforts are not all on surface. Company itself without USG prompting is actively and seriously embarked on initiatives which hopefully will pay off and through USG requests GOI control emotional situation and harassment which only complicate their

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NEA:RPDavies:al

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8/31/69X

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APPROVED BY:

NEA - Mr. Davies

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S/S - Mr. Lloyd

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PA/HO, Department of State

E.O. 12958, as amended

June 22, 2004

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FORM DS-322
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effort. Company believes Syrians desire to disembarass themselves of situation in which they are not only in violation international air standards but holding as hostages four women and two aging men. Reports from Italians which we have shared with Israelis also reflect apparent Syrian discomfiture.

2. Israelis will by now have seen TWA statement which makes clear that company feels the strongest of obligations to detained passengers and will do everything in company's power to secure their release. ~~XXXXXX~~ Contrary to Bitan assertion that Company stated pilot remaining to check repairs, Company statement makes clear that in connection with obtaining release of passengers "To this end, TWA Captain Dean A. Carter, and other TWA representatives in Damascus will now effect considerable effort on the scene to remedy this extremely distressing turn of events."

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3. Israel's original demand that all passengers be left in Damascus unless all left was clearly unfeasible. Passengers other than Israelis were set free and could depart by normal means of transportation. TWA did not have it in its power to force them to remain. Given pressures from Greek and Italian Governments whose nationals were detained, to say nothing of reaction of Americans, company attempt to accomplish this would have aroused storm of protests and charges it disregarding its obligations to larger part of passengers. Israelis should also know that Company has never been able to establish direct communication with Syrians and that actual Syrian intentions other than those conveyed through Italians were known only when chartered aircraft landed. We and company believe leaving co-pilot and flight engineer would not have helped situation.

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Syrians would have been given opportunity to ignore subordinate members crew or to expel them. In addition, intelligence information from cockpit crew was essential and could not have been provided had these been left behind.

4. With respect to USG efforts, you should provide details of State 147502 covering efforts with other governments and note that special ICAO committee being requested to meet Monday morning. We believe this group will ask report from the X SARG on their actions in the light of responsibilities as members of ICAO.

5. It is the consensus of agencies here that Israel is in favorable position vis-a-vis world opinion and that some governments recognize issue here over-rides Arab-Israel element and that Syrian association with Fedayeen action by holding passengers has serious implications

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for all. You should note also Under Secretary Johnson's exchange with Soviet Charge as conveyed State 147510. Statement by President International Air Pilots Association calling for ~~world-wide~~ world-wide strike of pilots previously sent Embassy and may be useful reference during your discussion.

6. You may reaffirm that USG urges Israel to take no actions that might reverse favorable trends we see developing as hamper current endeavors.

END

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